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ABSTRACT

This document discusses how service learning has developed over the past century in its practices from involvement in volunteerism to active civic engagement. It is so beneficial to both learners and the community that many educators and government leaders believe it should be a required component in the educational career of all students. The findings from a study about Service Learning and Problem-Based Learning concluded that student and teacher motivation substantially increased when combining Problem Based Learning (PBL) with Service Learning in the Communication classroom. Reciprocity of motivations exists between the teacher and her/his students. Students' communication skills improve, having successfully engaged in collaborative writing, speaking, and listening processes, and public speaking opportunities and additionally students report transfer of communication skills to other settings. The data shows that this process causes students to move through all five levels of Bloom's (1964) Affective Taxonomy. By combining two pedagogies, students met or exceeded cognitive learning outcomes. It is important to understand the critical role of the teacher in combing the two pedagogies effectively because the immersion of the teacher in the student endeavors makes him/her a stakeholder in the project's outcomes. (MZ)

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Creative Alternatives for Service Learning: A Project-Based Approach

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We all know about agency placements for Service Learning opportunities. But, in today's world of liability, and other concerns, some colleges are backing away from this traditional mode of service to the community. There are options!

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy challenged, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country" (Grice & Skinner, 2002, p. 352). In 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr., proclaimed, "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve" (p. 359). More recently, after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on America, President George W. Bush called on Americans to "make a difference" by dedicating two years, or a total of 4,000 hours, to community service (Willey, SW2). Service to one's community and nation is a high calling, one that monumental education figure, John Dewey, envisioned as the pragmatic and ultimate goal of public education (Fogarty, 1997).

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Service Learning has been termed an " 'education common'—a pedagogical meeting place whose origins and principles are shared by a wide range of American and international cultural communities" (Kielsmeier, 2000, p. 652). Service Learning has developed over the past century in its motivations and practices from involvement in volunteerism to active civic engagement. Its benefits to both learners and community are vast and significant, such that many educators and government leaders believe it should

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be a required component in the educational career of all students (2000). From the preamble to the Wingspread Report, *Principles of Good Practice for Combining Service and Learning:*

> We are a nation founded upon active citizenship and participation in community life. We have always believed that individuals can and should serve…Service, combined with learning, adds value to each and transforms both. Those who serve and those who are served are thus able to develop the informed judgment, imagination, and skills that lead to a greater capacity to contribute to the common good. (Mann & Patrick, 2000, p. 45)

Responding to liability issues, in 2002, the Maricopa County Community College District, the largest district in the nation, instituted a policy that limits Service Learning agency partners to those who can produce evidence of certain levels of insurance that protect the district from liability claims. For various reasons, the list of "approved" agencies lacks representation from the western area of the county (with the exception of local school districts where Education majors are placed), making it difficult to place Westside (EMCC) Service learners. In response to this, Service Learning at EMCC has become more focused on campus-based Service Learning projects that "solve" "problems." Problems are defined as tasks, opportunities, unfortunate situations, and discrepancy gaps that become team projects to work through the problem-solving process and implementation of "solutions."

The findings from a study of this method of combining Service Learning and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) by Turner (2002), and supported by theory and the literature, were that student and teacher motivation substantially increased when combining PBL with Service Learning in the Communication classroom. A reciprocity of motivation exists between the teacher and her students. Additional effects on students are that cognitive objectives were met or exceeded. Students' communication skills improve, having successfully engaged in collaborative writing, speaking, and listening processes, and public speaking opportunities. Additionally, students report transfer of communication skills to other settings. The students also move through all levels of Blooms Taxonomy of Thinking. Integrating the Service Learning with PBL gives students the opportunity to analyze and evaluate their local campus community to identify problems. They then synthesize their documentation of the problems to develop problem statements. While implementing their solutions, students monitor progress and engage in reflective thinking in their journals. Combining PBL and Service Learning provides students with many more opportunities to engage in critical thinking than would be the case of using only one method.

Students also show evidence of knowing, understanding, applying, analyzing, and evaluating the Communication and Math course concepts, as the concepts are integrated into their Service Learning projects (Turner, 2002).

Combining the two methods is efficacious in teaching to the whole student Students meet affective as well as cognitive learning outcomes. Data clearly shows that students move through all five levels of Bloom's (1964) Affective Taxonomy. They attend to a problem in their local environment, become aware of the causes of the

problem, become involved in solving the problem, impart greater value in community service, and commitment to future involvement, moving through the levels leads to the improvement of student self efficacy, changes in self concept, and heightened self esteem. Ccombining the two pedagogies, students meet or exceed cognitive learning outcomes (the strength inherent in the PBL process), and meeting affective learning outcomes, the strength inherent in Service Learning (Turner, 2002).

The role of the teacher in successfully combining the two pedagogies cannot be understated. The immersion of the teacher in the student endeavors makes her a stakeholder in the projects' outcomes. The teacher is a facilitator, but also a coach and a full participant. Together, they made a difference, within themselves and for others.

Finally, transforming PBL into a more pragmatic strategy by having students select and solve real life problems means that the problems are real-life "messy." New problems arise as the students implement solutions. Additionally, the teacher is a learner. Lessons learned from both a novice and veteran teachers will be discussed in the session. The process for both Service learners and the teacher-facilitators mirrors real life problem solving outside of the classroom. However, in defending the Constitution of the United States, James Madison offered, "Democracy is not efficient" (Cleveland, 2002). John Dewey would agree.

For examples of Service Learning projects at EMCC that were addressed in a problem-based mode, you may visit the website at:

http://www.emc.maricopa.edu/servicelearning/

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